



Week of Nov. 12 – Nov. 18, 2008

Diversity

People tend to use the terms Diversity and Equal Opportunity (EO) interchangeably. However, the Air Force makes a distinction between Diversity and EO. Diversity is mission-oriented and leadership driven—the way we should embrace our differences and utilize them to better accomplish our mission. EO is compliance-oriented and legally driven—the bare minimum standards by which we must treat others (e.g., don't discriminate or harass).

Diversity is broadly defined as a composite of individual characteristics, experiences, and abilities consistent with the Air Force Core Values and the Air Force Mission. Air Force Diversity includes, but is not limited to, personal life experiences, geographic background, socioeconomic background, cultural knowledge, educational background, work background, language abilities, physical abilities, philosophical/spiritual perspectives, age, race, ethnicity and gender.

Because of its broad definition, AF Diversity is categorized in the following four dimensions to facilitate understanding.

- Most people are familiar with **Demographic Diversity** because it is associated with Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) protected groups and demographic data that is routinely captured; such as age, race/ethnicity, religion, disability, gender, marital status and national origin. Demographic trends show that diversity is increasing exponentially in American society; therefore, we need to ensure that we are attracting a diverse pool of candidates to benefit from their valuable contributions.
- The dimension that is probably least understood in the diversity context is **Behavioral/Cognitive Diversity**. It refers to differences in personality types and styles of work, thinking and learning. It brings balance to the workplace by mitigating extremes associated with one particular type/style. Diverse approaches to problem solving increase creativity and innovation.
- Due to organizational and rank structures, **Structural Diversity** is prevalent across the Air Force. Structural Diversity refers to organizational and institutional characteristics that affect interaction. Leveraging skills and experiences from other services, components and occupations (e.g., differences among active, guard and reserve; AFSCs; rank, etc.) increase mission capability.
- The fourth dimension, **Global Diversity**, is knowledge of and experience with foreign languages and cultures of citizen and non-citizen Airmen, exchange officers, coalition partners, and foreign nationals with whom we interact as part of a globally engaged Air Force. Global diversity expands experiences and skills to draw on for problem solving and decision making.

Increasing awareness of diversity enables the Air Force to maximize individual strengths and create synergies that facilitate mission success.

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